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Together, we can solve environmental problems with communities in common-sense ways

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St. Louis Community-Based Environmental Protection (CBEP) Initiative (Region 7):

St. Louis is one of the nation's major centers of transportation, manufacturing, commerce, and education. However, due to its aging infrastructure, industrial base, urban sprawl, and other issues common to the nation's older cities, St. Louis has its share of environmental problems.

In 1997, U.S. EPA started a CBEP initiative with the city of St. Louis to improve the way environmental issues are dealt with. The goal is to work in partnership with citizens and State and local governments to:

- (1) identify environmental concerns at the neighborhood level.
- (2) establish priorities among participants and governmental agencies.
- (3) assist residents and partners in resolving environmental issues that will improve the quality of life in St. Louis neighborhoods.

Background

The Gateway Initiative provides a forum to address local environmental issues. Gateway was created by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA Regions 5 and 7), Illinois EPA, and other Federal, State, and local agencies concerned about environmental issues.

U.S. EPA Region 5 headquarters is located in Chicago, Illinois and focuses on the East St. Louis area. U.S. EPA Region 7 headquarters is located in Kansas City, Kansas and focuses on the St. Louis metro area. The governmental agencies work with local citizens, environmental groups, and others to provide creative, common-sense solutions to environmental problems. The partners for the Gateway Initiative are listed on page 7.

Community Based Environmental Protection (CBEP) Projects

Listening Tour

U.S. EPA launched the first phase of the CBEP Initiative by awarding a grant to St. Louis Community College (SLCC) to conduct a series of interactive public meetings called "The Listening Tour" (Tour). The goal of the Tour was to collect information on citizens' concerns about their environment. SLCC organized a task force of community representatives to shape and guide the Tour. They also contracted with a local communications firm to assemble audiences and initiate creative dialogue. The Tour consisted of 12 community meetings so that every neighborhood in the City was represented.

Some priority environmental issues emerged as a result of the Tour. U.S. EPA and other governmental organizations are now using the information to develop the next phase of the initiative.

The next phase will involve working with residents in individual neighborhoods or groups of neighborhoods to design and implement strategies to resolve environmental issues. In fact, five neighborhood projects are scheduled to start in 1999.

Listening Tour Work Continues With Neighborhood Environmental Projects

SLCC and partners are continuing the public participation work started by the Listening Tour. They organized four more public meetings to share the history and results of the Listening Tour. The meetings also offered the opportunity for neighborhoods to participate in the projects.

SLCC and partners will also work with two neighborhoods or groups of neighborhoods on environmental issues of their own choosing. Neighborhood leaders for the projects will receive leadership training in grant writing, defining issues, formulating strategic plans, and developing partnerships. SLCC and partners will create models for starting environmental projects by documenting project and leadership development steps. These models will then be available for use in other neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Air Quality Project

Air pollution ranked highest among residents' environmental concerns at all 12 Listening Tour meetings.

Many residents spoke of their concern about discharges from industries near their neighborhoods,

respiratory illnesses, and high rates of asthma among children.



This summer, U.S. EPA and other partners will work to address residents' concerns through an air quality project in certain neighborhoods. During the project, the partners will create an emissions inventory for the selected neighborhoods. They will also use an air pollutants risk screening model developed and tested by U.S. EPA in Baltimore over the past two years to determine potential levels of exposure that may result from various chemical releases. The partners will then complete risk assessments as appropriate. Additional monitoring may also be required during the course of the project.

Once the inventory is complete, U.S. EPA will assist local partners in determining an appropriate course of action. During the initial stages of the neighborhood air quality project, U.S. EPA will fund a local project coordinator's position. In addition, the University of Missouri St. Louis, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and City and State health departments will provide technical assistance for data collection and interpretation.

Abandoned Building Project

Another environmental concern identified during the Listening Tour was the existence of abandoned housing in the St. Louis area. U.S. EPA met with partners to identify whether a partnership could address the issue of abandoned housing better than an individual organization. From this group, the abandoned building pilot project emerged.

The project includes working with an alderman, residents, and developers to select structures for demolition. A team of Federal, State, and City staff will perform building inspections to identify and quantify hazardous materials that must be removed as a part of the demolition plan. Then, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (U.S. ACE) will design and oversee the demolition project.

Most of the housing in the area was built in the early 1900s when asbestos was used as furnace insulation and as a component in ceiling and floor tiles. Lead-based paint is also a problem. The 15 houses which will be targeted for demolition are in poor condition and owned by the City as a result of tax default. These structures pose a physical hazard and a threat of asbestos and lead releases. Asbestos-containing materials require special handling under the Federal National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAPS) rules, making demolition expensive. The cost of demolishing the properties is part of the reason they are in their current condition.

Through the pilot project, U.S. EPA plans to develop a model for demolishing abandoned buildings that neighborhoods, contractors, and the City can use in other locations. U.S. EPA also plans to address the issues surrounding NESHAPS' compliance that have strained relationships among regulators and the City for years and to find cost effective, environmentally sound ways to demolish buildings.

This innovative project is designed to clear multiple abandoned houses within a single neighborhood in order to assemble parcels for redevelopment. There are approximately 10,000 parcels of abandoned property in the City.

Brownfields Redevelopment Project

St. Louis has a proposed \$160-million plan to redevelop the City's south side neighborhood. In order to redevelop the area, an abandoned City hospital and the adjacent abandoned Malcom Bliss public housing complex must be demolished.

In September 1998, U.S. EPA and U.S. ACE agreed to assist the City in conducting a brownfields assessment of the abandoned City Hospital site. The site is known to contain asbestos insulation, underground storage tanks, drums of unknown chemicals, and possible soil contamination. Assessment work was completed in February 1999. U.S. EPA also agreed to provide a staff person to the City to assist with brownfields work during 1999.

North Riverfront Sustainable Communities Project

In 1998, U.S. EPA awarded the Grace Hill Neighborhood Services organization a Sustainable Development Challenge Grant to help complete the Mississippi Riverfront Trail. The trail is about ten miles long and runs from the Arch to the Chain-of-Rocks bridge. Grace Hill is designing a native plant greenhouse to supply plants for landscaping the trail. The greenhouse will provide economic development opportunities because it will be built by residents of low income neighborhoods. The Natural Resources Conservation Service will offer the community opportunities to learn about biodiversity and the environment by teaching residents about horticulture and greenhouse management.

The Mississippi Riverfront Trail traverses a largely industrialized area and touches property owned by 35 different industries. U.S. EPA and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources hosted a meeting in



February to encourage the development of partnerships between industries and trail sponsors to assist in trail completion.

The riverfront trail and green house project is a component of a much larger Greenway Action Plan sponsored by St. Louis 2004. The goal of the Greenway Action Plan is to develop 200 miles of trails in St. Louis by the year 2004.

Environmental Justice (EJ) Community University Partnership Grant

In 1997, U.S. EPA funded a grant to the University of Missouri at St. Louis (UMSL); Project HOPE; Imani Family Center; neighborhood association leaders in Hyde Park, Pagedale and Goose Hill; Sustainable St. Louis; and U.S. EPA Region 5 and 7 to help residents of minority and low income communities identify and solve environmental problems. Four neighborhoods, two in St. Louis and two in East St. Louis, were selected for the three year project. UMSL is responsible for technical assistance and developing community profiles. UMSL is also analyzing the impact of environmental conditions on residents' health. A handbook is being constructed by UMSL that citizens can use to identify environmental problems and locate the appropriate governmental agencies for assistance.

Environmental Monitoring, Public Access, Community Tracking (EMPACT) Project

In 1998, U.S. EPA Regions 5 and 7 worked with the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council and U.S. EPA Office of Research and Development (EPA-ORD) to develop the first phase of an (EMPACT) project. The EMPACT project calls on citizens and trade groups in the St. Louis area to identify the kinds of environmental information they need on a continuing basis. U.S. EPA hopes that this information would then be used by other groups in the City and region to develop a larger EMPACT grant proposal that involves collection and delivery of timely environmental information.

More Projects ...

Various other projects are underway in St. Louis that compliment, but are not managed under, the CBEP Initiative. These projects include environmental education, environmental justice, and pollution prevention.

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Sauget Area 1 & 2 Superfund Sites Update

U.S. EPA Region 5

Sauget Area 1

Site Location: Most of the Area 1 site lies between Illinois Route 3 and Falling Springs Road near Sauget and Cahokia. Comprised of six disposal areas (referred to as "source areas"), it also includes approximately four miles of contaminated sediments in Dead Creek.

Site Description: The source areas occupy a total of about 40 acres of land, and each source area is located very close to Dead Creek. One of these areas was partly addressed by a U.S. EPA Removal Action in 1995. These areas were used as industrial and municipal disposal areas starting in the 1930s for several manufacturing facilities in the area, as well as by local municipalities. The sites (including Dead Creek) are contaminated with a large variety of chemicals including **polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)** and **dioxins**. Metals contamination includes arsenic, copper, lead, mercury, nickel, silver and zinc. Words in **bold** are defined in glossary below.

Site Status: Currently, U.S. EPA is working with Solutia under an Administrative Order of Consent (AOC) to conduct a large amount of field sampling. The field sampling will be conducted this summer and fall. The AOC also requires Solutia to write both an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) and Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS). The purpose of the EE/CA and RI/FS is to determine the nature and extent of contamination, as well as possible cleanup solutions. It is unlikely there will be any full-scale cleanup actions at the site until at least the year 2001. A Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) has been awarded at the site to help interested citizens hire independent contractors to help interpret data.

The point of contact for the TAG is Mike Kohlenberger at (618) 337-7602.

Sauget Area 2

Site Location: The Area 2 site is comprised of five source areas and occupies approximately 344 acres of land. Most of the source areas are located in Sauget, Illinois, however a small part of the site lies within the Village of Cahokia. All of Area 2 is located west of Illinois Route 3 and extends over to the bank of the Mississippi River.

Site Description: The Area 2 site is very similar to the Area 1 site. The source areas were used as disposal sites for several manufacturing facilities in the Sauget area, including the Village of Sauget and its wastewater treatment plant. Contamination is similar to Area 1 (PCBs, dioxins, and heavy metals). A Removal Action was completed by U.S. EPA in a small portion of the site next to the Mississippi River because flooding washed out the side of the landfill and sent drums into the river.

Site Status: U.S. EPA recently attempted to get several Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) to sign an AOC for completing a time-critical removal at a southern portion of the site. However, no PRPs agreed to sign the AOC. Illinois EPA is currently conducting on-site sampling to propose the site for the National Priorities List later this year. The NPL is a roster of the nation's most hazardous sites eligible for cleanup under a Federal program called Superfund.

Glossary

Dioxins – A generic name for a group of 210 related chemicals. Dioxins can be formed as unwanted by-products during the manufacture of certain pesticides, during combustion of certain waste materials, and through reactions involving chlorine and organic chemicals. Experiments with laboratory animals have shown that dioxins are a known cause of cancer in animals. These tests have shown other toxic effects, including effects on skin and thyroid, liver damage, and effects on unborn offspring. Based on animal test results, dioxins are considered a suspected cause of cancer in human beings.

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) – PCBs are a family of organic compounds used since 1926 in electric transformers as insulators and coolants, in lubricants, carbonless copy paper, adhesives, and caulking compounds. PCBs are extremely persistent in the environment. PCBs can be stored in the fatty tissues of humans and animals. U.S. EPA banned the use of PCBs, with limited exceptions, in 1976. In general, PCBs are not as toxic in high short-term doses as some other chemicals, although severe and long-term exposure can cause liver damage. PCBs have also been found to cause cancer in laboratory animals.

Mississippi Riverbank Cleanup

Here is a challenge to Gateway area residents:

The challenge is to determine if it is feasible to conduct a riverbank cleanup along the Mississippi River. Yes, the **ENTIRE MISSISSIPPI RIVER**. While an annual sweep along the Ohio Riverbank is always highly successful, and volunteers periodically clean up smaller riverbanks throughout the United States, a cleanup of this size has never been attempted. Aside from the obvious goal of gathering as much litter and debris from the river banks as possible in a single day, a secondary goal would be to foster concern for overall river quality year round.

How you can help:

First, let us know what you think of the idea and why. If you have suggestions on how to make the event work in the Gateway area, please share those suggestions. If you have thoughts about how to generate public interest in the project, those thoughts would also be appreciated.

Second, call, write, or email us. Let us know how you or another organization could participate. If you are unable to physically participate, perhaps you would be able to make a few telephone calls to explain the project to friends and neighbors.

Third, especially if you think the idea is workable, tell somebody, **tell everybody**, that the idea is in the works, and invite them to participate by sharing either their time, their ideas, or both.

To share your ideas or discuss the pros and cons of the biggest riverbank cleanup ever attempted, please contact:

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Gateway Partners

Region 5:

- East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP)
- East St. Louis Community Action Committee (ESL CAN)
- East St. Louis Housing Authority
- Illinois Attorney General's Office
- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Illinois EPA
- Mississippi River Basin Alliance
- Missouri Department of Health
- Neighbors United for Progress
- New Spirit
- St. Clair County Sheriff's Department
- St. Clair County State's Attorney's Office
- Scott Air Force Base
- Solutia (Monsanto)
- Stop Polluting Illinois
- U.S. EPA
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Illinois



Region 7:

- American Lung Association of Greater St. Louis
- Better Family Life
- CORO
- East-West Gateway Coordinating Council
- Family Care Health Center
- Grace Hill AmeriCorps
- Grace Hill Neighborhood Services
- Imani Family Center
- Missouri Coalition for the Environment
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources
- Missouri Nursery Association
- Neighborhood Association Leaders in Hyde Park
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Operation Safe Street
- Pagedale and Goose Hill
- Project HOPE
- Regional Commerce and Growth Association
- St. Louis Association of Neighborhood Organizations
- St. Louis Community College
- St. Louis Development Corporation
- St. Louis Health Department
- St. Louis Mayor's Office
- St. Louis 2004
- St. Louis University
- Sustainable St. Louis
- Teen Sweep
- TrailNet
- United Way
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. EPA
- University of Missouri at St. Louis
- The Urban League of Greater St. Louis
- Wesley House